

**Bibra Lake Plankton.**—In August, 1947, dense concentrations of plankton were noticed in Bibra Lake, south of Fremantle, and a haul was made with an N 70 standard plankton net. The net was pulled for a distance of 10 yards at the surface alongside the small jetty on the western side of the lake. An examination of 1 cc. of the catch showed a total of 80 individuals of the larger forms of fresh water zooplankton comprising Cladocera, Copepoda and Ostracoda in the following proportions: Copepoda, 65 (or 81.5%); Cladocera, 11 (14.5%) and Ostracoda, 4 (5%). *Daphnia thomsoni* was the only Cladoceran found in the catch. The species was "schooling" in very large numbers in the shallows about two or three hundred yards further south and one pound, live weight, was caught in a few minutes with a wire strainer about five inches in diameter.

—BRUCE SHIPWAY, South Perth.

**Masked Woodswallows and Fork-tailed Swifts at Caron.**—On March 27, 1948, I was observing in an area of light timber with dense, healthy, undergrowth near Caron, when I noted three birds which I took to be woodswallows, in the top of a dead tree at perhaps 300 yards distance.

While watching these through binoculars in an endeavour to confirm my provisional identification, they rose into the air and with them a considerable body of similar birds. The flock moved in my direction (i.e., easterly) and passed over my head. From their flight, calls, and as they drew nearer, general appearance, I was able to identify them without difficulty as Masked Woodswallows (*Artamus personatus*) and not the more frequently encountered Black-faced Woodswallow (*A. melanops*). The number in the flock I estimated at c. 150, but this estimate is very rough as I had at first, to concentrate upon the identification of the birds. There appeared to be the usual fairly high percentage of birds with the black throat plumage ill-defined. The birds continued to move steadily eastward until they passed from view. The time was then 0715 hours. This is my only record of this species at Caron.

The country surrounding this lightly timbered area is, for some distance, open heathland, so it is possible that this assemblage of woodswallows had spent the night among the timber and was resuming an easterly movement at the time of my encounter.

As this fairly compact flock of woodswallows swept by I saw to my astonishment that the rearguard was accompanied by a few Fork-tailed Swifts (*Micropus pacificus*). Swifts continued to straggle by after the manner of their kind, until perhaps fifty had passed over. These, like the woodswallows, were flying fairly low, i.e., at not more than two hundred feet, so that individuals could be seen fairly plainly. With the last of the swifts, as though to confirm my impression that this was no accidental association, came a solitary Masked Woodswallow. I gained the impression

that the woodswallows were flying fairly fast and that the swifts were cruising at a relatively leisurely speed. This is my only record of the Fork-tailed Swift at Caron.

The morning was clear, hot and fine, with little wind. Later the wind strengthened from the east.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Caron.

**The Smallest Western Australian Bird.**—I have occasionally been asked the question—"Which do you consider the smallest Western Australian bird?" We have several genera of small birds and which contains actually the smallest species is not an easy matter to determine at first glance. Some birds flit about with long tails and have the habit of fluffing out their body feathers, thus exaggerating their real size. Such a species is the common Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura flabellifera*). On the other hand we have forms such as the Thornbills (*Acanthiza*), Pardalotes, Wren-warblers (*Malurus*), Weebill (*Smicromis brevirostris*), Mistletoe-bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*) and the Emu-wrens (*Stipiturus*).

I have prepared many skins of birds for scientific examination. When skinned the bodies of all the above-mentioned birds are very small indeed, especially in the case of the last three and only very sensitive scales would indicate the difference. The Emu-wren has a long tail and puffs out its body feathers somewhat. The other two are compact little birds with tails on the short side in comparison, especially so in the case of the Weebill. This little bird is well known though I have nowhere found it common. It has a loud musical voice and favours those curious lengthy but narrow groves of saplings found in the drier parts of the State. It builds a small but very neat domed nest of spiders' webs, cocoons and lichens. The nest always reminds me of that of the Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*) of Western Europe. It lays three white eggs speckled with light brown and the small nest has to accommodate the brooding female and well-grown young at the conclusion of the nesting period.

The Mistletoe-bird is not so well known in the South-west as the thornbills and pardalotes. It is a quiet retiring species haunting the tops of trees but is best studied, perhaps, in districts where mulga and other large tree-like bushes predominate. The nest is wonderfully constructed of spider webs, cocoons and animal hair. It is dome-shaped but hung from some slender twig. I brought one home from central Australia. Weighed with the accompanying twig to which it was attached it sealed seven grains on a chemist's balance. In this fragile house the female has to brood over three developed young birds. These facts will give an idea of the smallness of everything involved.

The tiny Emu-wrens of the South-west haunt the coastal sandhills and blackboy flats. Their nests are built in low scrub, well hidden but with a favourable look-out. The female lays three large eggs considering her size. I think on the whole, if we ignore its long tail, this is the smallest Western Australian bird—feathers have no appreciable weight in the case of emu-wrens.

—F. LAWSON WHITLOCK, Bunbury.